

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alexine Casanova and I am from Hamden. I am also part of Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS).

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

As the daughter and wife of immigrants and someone who has worked in refugee resettlement services for more than 7 years, I am familiar with the struggles newcomers face in the United States and of how status impacts eligibility for services that every person should have a right to. As someone enrolled in HUSKY, I am also intimately aware of and grateful for the relative security and stability that this program provides.

IRIS helps hundreds of immigrants build new lives in Connecticut each year. The differences in the experiences of families whose stories of trauma and persecution are similar but arrived here by different paths, some deemed legal and others not, is obvious and unjust. Refugees who are invited to this country are eligible for HUSKY as soon as they set foot in Connecticut. Asylum seekers, if allowed into the United States, are not eligible for most public benefits. Many people who should have been eligible for asylum were never granted an opportunity to claim it. Universal access to health care, without discrimination, is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so clearly denying coverage to our undocumented and asylum seeking neighbors who are income eligible for HUSKY is not right.

Passing S.B. 284 is needed for many reasons. It will ensure the health and the survival of the children of our communities. It will change lives for the better. But it won't be sufficient. Once this bill is passed we need to continue to work to ensure that all immigrants including parents and all adults can also access healthcare. Health kids need healthy parents and families to care for them. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more obvious that disparities in health and access to healthcare are detrimental to our entire society.

I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. I hope that in the future the committee will also work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Alexine Casanova